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Culture of peace

Globalization and interdependence

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

Letter dated 24 September 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the declaration adopted by the participants of the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which was held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 23 and 24 September 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 44, 100 and 156, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yerzhan Kh. **Kzykhanov**

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Annex to the letter dated 24 September 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Russian]

Declaration of the participants at the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions

We, the participants at the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held on 23 and 24 September 2003 in Astana, the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

Recognizing the right of each human person to freely be convinced, choose, express and practise his/her religion,

Considering inter-religious dialogue as one of the most important instruments for ensuring peace and harmony among peoples and nations,

Supporting the efforts of the United Nations, other relevant international and regional organizations, as well as Governments, civil societies and non-governmental organizations in the promotion of dialogue among civilizations,

Confirming the importance of religion for the well-being of all mankind,

Condemning the misrepresentation of religions and the incorrect use of differences among religions as a means for achieving selfish, disruptive and violent goals,

Conscious of

The declining sense of respect for the sanctity of human life and the dignity of every human person,

The serious challenges posed to global stability by poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, immorality and lack of access to clean water and health care,

The recourse to oppression, cruelty and violence as the principal instruments for resolving disputes,

The ecological crisis in which the world finds itself, with grave consequences for present and future generations,

Declare:

That the promotion of the values of tolerance, truth, justice and love must be the aim of any religious teaching,

That extremism, terrorism and other forms of violence in the name of religion have nothing to do with genuine understanding of religion, but are threats to human life and hence should be rejected,

May our commitments be blessed and all the peoples of the world be granted justice, peace and prosperity.

That the diversity of religious beliefs and practices should not lead to mutual suspicion, discrimination and humiliation, but to a mutual acceptance and harmony, demonstrating distinctive characteristics of each religion and culture,

That religions must aspire towards greater cooperation, recognizing tolerance and mutual acceptance as essential instruments in the peaceful coexistence of all peoples,

That educational programmes and the means of social communication should be essential instruments for promotion of positive attitudes towards religions and cultures,

That inter-religious dialogue is one of the key means for social development and the promotion of the well-being of all peoples, fostering tolerance, mutual understanding and harmony among different cultures and religions, and operating to bring an end to conflicts and violence,

That the entire human family must be encouraged to overcome hatred, enmity, intolerance and xenophobia,

We shall strengthen cooperation in promoting spiritual values and the culture of dialogue with the aim of ensuring peace in the new millennium,

We are prepared to make every effort not to allow the use of religious differences as an instrument of hatred and discord, in order to save mankind from a global conflict of religions and cultures,

We look forward to joint actions to ensure peace and progress for humanity and to foster the stability of societies as the basis for a harmonious world for the future,

We thank the Republic of Kazakhstan and His Excellency President Nursultan Nazarbayev for initiating and hosting this Congress,

May our commitments be blessed and all the peoples of the world be granted justice, peace and prosperity.

Resolutions of the First Congress of World and Traditional National Religions

The participants of the First Congress of World and Traditional National Religions, held on 23 and 24 September 2003 in Astana, the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

Taking into consideration the fruitful exchange of views on the role of religions in promoting peace and harmony in the world,

Expressing common understanding of the need to continue the constructive dialogue among representatives of the world's religions,

Have resolved:

- To convene the Congress at least once every three years;
- To approve the following title of the Congress — "Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions";
- To request the Republic of Kazakhstan as the initiator of the Congress, to elaborate all aspects related to the establishment of the Secretariat;
- To convene the Second Congress in Astana, the Republic of Kazakhstan.